

Oral Questions

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the answer—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: I am sorry the hon. gentlemen opposite treat this matter so frivolously in view of the outcome of yesterday's events. The answer is repeated. I again emphasize my willingness to brief fully the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the New Democratic Party with respect to the entire range of security measures and, hopefully, to gain their helpful input in a constructive way, knowing full well that both gentlemen are bound by their oath as Privy Counsellors to keep such matters secret.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): We don't want to brief the terrorists.

AWARENESS OF POTENTIAL THREAT TO TURKISH EMBASSY

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Was the Government aware of the high alert status that the international intelligence community was providing around the world with regard to the potential threat to the Turkish Embassies and Turkish communities, as a result of the most recent court actions in France? If the Government was aware of that, did it choose simply to ignore it in the case of the Turkish Embassy in Ottawa?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Of course we were aware, as was the previous Government, of the facts which were embodied in the question of the hon. gentleman. I indicated to previous questioners that changes in the degree of security at the Turkish Embassy were brought about as recently as last month in response to that situation. I again emphasize that, after those changes were brought about, the Turkish Embassy officials themselves expressed satisfaction with them.

ADEQUACY OF PROTECTION

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, is it the opinion of the Deputy Prime Minister that adequate security can be provided, in a case of a high alert situation, particularly where threats have already been made publicly and conveyed through the international intelligence agencies, by providing one man with one gun and five bullets, and an order not to shoot?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: That is a careless question.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): In all fairness, Mr. Speaker, I do not accept those facts as set out in the hon. gentleman's question. They may well be so, but surely that is a matter that is more properly left to the review process which is now ongoing. I would think that the Leader of the Hon. Member's own Party, and the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, would want to

participate in that process and to come forward with their constructive suggestions. I would suggest to the Hon. Member that it does no one any good, least of all those who we are seeking to protect with these security arrangements, to brief terrorists rather than the right hon. gentleman or the Leader of his own Party.

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE ON MEASURES TAKEN

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would think the Deputy Prime Minister knows full well that if we were to share that briefing he would, in effect, co-opt us, thereby preventing us from putting proper questions in the House of Commons. That is not the way it is going to happen.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Such irresponsibility.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The way the Deputy Prime Minister has intervened this afternoon to protect the Solicitor General reminds me very much of Alexander Haig saying: "I'm in charge here".

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Foster: Erik's got the guns.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has a question, please?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Does the Deputy Prime Minister not feel that national security could be enhanced if this Parliament and the country could be assured that proper response was made to that report, and that proper action was taken by the Government? We do not want the details. We just want an assurance that everything that could have been done was done.

● (1440)

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I cannot allow to pass unnoticed the expressed view of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition that I have no responsibility in speaking on behalf of the Government in matters of this nature. That is what he is suggesting when he criticizes me for responding on behalf of the Government, which I believe I have a responsibility for doing, notwithstanding the extremely capable and responsible Solicitor General.

With respect to the enhancement of security, there can be no question that any security arrangements can be enhanced. Yesterday's incident proves that. The incident in the British Isles proves that. The incidents elsewhere around the world are proof of the fact that any security arrangements can be improved. But that is precisely the reason for our ongoing review at this very moment.